

POTTI SRIRAMULU



Dr. Vijaya Subbaraj

POTTI SRIRAMULU



1950 TO 1990

VASAVI CLUB BANASHANKARI (BANGALORE)

Door No. 1301A, Club No. 1144/286-37

(Affiliated to International Association of Vasavi Clubs)

SI. No. A Cross 13th Main, Banashankara, BSK 3rd Stage

Bangalore - 560 045

POTTI SRIRAMULU

(A LIFE SKETCH)

Dr. Vijaya Subbaraj



LIVE TO SERVE

VASAVI CLUB BANASHANKARI (BANGALORE)

District V301A, Club No. 1144/2006-07

(Affiliated to International Association of Vasavi Clubs)

51, 1st 'A' Cross, 35th Main, Banagirinagara, BSK 3rd Stage,
Bangalore - 560 085

Potti Sriramulu (A Life Sketch) - Written by
Dr. Vijaya Subbaraj, Published by **Vasavi Club Banashankari**
(Bangalore) District V301A, Club No. 1144/2006-07, (Affiliated
to Vasavi Clubs International), 51, 1st 'A' Cross, 35th Main,
Banagirinagara, BSK 3rd Stage, Bangalore - 560 085

© Sri Saraswathi Books

First Edition : 2008

Pages : 68

Price : 40/- (Rupees Forty Only)

Distributors

SRI SARASWATHI BOOKS

342, Chitramala Apartments, Byrasandra, Jayanagar
I Block East, Bangalore - 560 011.
PH : 22441417, 98458 08500



ISO 9001-2000

Chamarajpet, Bangalore-18

☎ : 2661 3123, 2661 8752

Preface

India has no dearth of great people who lived for ideals, values, and morals. They sacrificed their lives for the cause of Nation and Society. Potti Sriramulu, father of Andhra Pradesh is one among such great souls. He is a giant figure in the annals of Andhra. Potti Sriramulu coming under the great influence of Gandhi and his principles, almost became a Gandhi himself and walked in his foot steps ardently and succeeded in realising his mentor's dreams. He responded to the call of Gandhi to participate in the freedom struggle, earned the applause of great leaders, including Gandhi for his exemplary patriotism.

Potti Sriramulu is remembered not only for being a National freedom fighter, he is more remembered in the context of Independent Andhra formation. He laid down his life in achieving, language based independent Andhra, and in preserving the identity of its tradition and culture.

Potti Sriramulu's acts, struggles, his concern for the down trodden, burning patriotism in him have made him immortal and an icon of reverence for the people of Andhra.

The opportunity of writing this book came to me as a pleasant surprise. I was invited to speak on the birthday celebration of this great soul. But I was not aware of details about his life and struggles. However I was curious to know about him. I used this opportunity and to gather information I delved into the annals of 'Andhra formation'. When I proceeded with my research, I was really chilled to know his life, as it was nothing but a saga of tragedies. His personal life was miserable; tragic. But like a phoenix he rose and through his virtues, patriotic endeavours, remained immortal in the hearts of Andhra people. I was thrilled to know about him and at the same time thought of writing a small life sketch to express my deep felt reverence to this great man and also to facilitate those that have similar feelings as me about this man.

When I conveyed my intention of writing a book on this soul, the office bearers of Vasavi Club, Banashankari came forward wholeheartedly to publish. So now this book is before you. It is only a small and humble attempt, I have made. Hope all the readers of this book will overlook the faults and receive with love and affection.

In the end I have also provided appendix highlighting some of the major events in Potti Sriramulu's life.

Dr. Vijaya Subbaraj

POTTI SRIRAMULU

Mahalakshamma eagerly turned her eyes towards the door. She was waiting for her husband. Normally he would return home by 8 o'clock. But to-day he was late. She was worried as what might have happened. It is months since she has served full meal to the family members.

Guruvaiah was running a petty shop where he sold groceries and other day to-day necessary items. He wanted to be too honest, but this kind of intense honesty was beyond imagination in the business. He sold his goods and things with marginal profit. Even to take that marginal profit he would feel guilty. But there was no other go. He hailed from a business community. He knew nothing but business of this sort.

He was not educated to take up any other kind of job or business. So with much difficulty he pulled on. He had to pass through

difficult times. He had no earnings enough, to feed his two children and wife.

He was very upset. He cursed himself for his incapacity to keep his family happy. He regretted for not providing two full meals to his family members.

He never felt reaching home early. A kind of shame dawned on him. To avoid his wife, he would reach home late.

Mahalakshmamma was getting worried. Her two children had gone to sleep. She got up from the place where she was sitting, unlatched the door. Walked few steps towards the threshold. Stretched her eyes into the darkness of the street and searched for any human form moving.

At a furlong distance, she noticed the human form walking towards her house. It really didn't look like walking but dragging with effort. She guessed that it must be her husband. Yes it proved true!

Guruvaiah when reached the threshold of the house, she could get full glimpse of him. He was gasping for breath. He looked too sick. The moment she saw him in that state, she too felt like fainting. But however she gathered her courage, and gave a support to

her husband who was faltering his steps. Brought him in, made him lie down on a mat which was spread on the floor. Sat close to him, whispered in his ears.

"Aren't you well?"

"No. I am OK. Only little bit tired. Nothing to worry. Did children eat anything?" He asked in a low voice.

"Yes, they had some rice porridge."

"Lakshmi, forgive me. I have not been able to provide any comforts to you and your children. Life has become hard for me. No business, no earnings." Apologetically he spoke.

"Don't be depressed. God is there. He will show us some way. If you don't mind, let me also do some job. If I earn even a little, that will be a great help. If we bother about dignity, respect and such other things we may have to starve. God is testing us. Let us take the challenge. To work for the self is no disgrace." - with these words she instilled hope and courage in him.

Guruvaiah couldn't contain himself. Tears slipped from his eyes. He stared into her eyes. He felt proud and grateful.

"Lakshmi, I am really lucky to have had you as my wife. I am proud and confident that you will do what you wished. But the things are different now. Not only we, entire region is facing the hardship of famine. No rains, farmers have laid down their ploughs. They have been selling away their cattle, because there is not even a blade of grass. People are dying of hunger. Children are eating what ever they come across and suffering because of that. Plants and trees are charred. Hand full of rice also has become a rare commodity. When such is the case what we have to do? Where we have to go?..." (There was a deep sigh..)

He continued to talk.

"Lakshmi, in this situation an idea has struck to my mind."

Mahalakshmmamma looked at him curiously. She could not guess what he would tell.

"Tell me, what is your idea? Are you going to start to a new business?"

He laughed feebly, and said, "Me! Start a new business!? Not a single pie in the hand, and think of business!"

"Then tell me what idea or a plan you have thought of."

He remained silent for a moment and said, "What if we move to some other place! Let us go to Madras and find a way for our livelihood."

"What you feel right you do it. I am always there with you to support. We have to think of our children. They must be given good education and make them successful in their lives."

"Yes that is the reason I thought of moving out from this place. I will find some job in shops. Own business with such circumstances is far beyond our dream. New place, unknown people. Hence no fear of losing respect or dignity, what do you say Lakshmi?"

"Can there be any other opinion, when there is no choice in our present conditions."

Both husband and wife discussed many things about their future plans. None of them could sleep for a wink of time. They looked at the clock. It was past twelve. Both the children unmindful of the problems were fast asleep.

Lakshmmamma got up and switched off the light. Both wife and husband forced themselves to sleep.

They took up a house at Madras. The house at Annapillai street of Jaritown was small but comfortable. Guruvaiah served as an assistant in some big grocery shop. But the earnings were not sufficient. Lakshamma also was forced to seek some kind of job to supplement the income. She worked in the neighbouring houses helping them in all kinds of household work. When ever any body send for her she would immediately rush to help them. Neighbours were all very happy with her nature. Without showing any displeasure, she would serve them with cheerful face.

Some how both husband and wife with perfect understanding and cooperation, pulled on. Despite poverty and many problems, they never lost their courage. With patience and perseverance they lived their lives. Tried to feel happy with what ever they procured.

The two children were sent to school. To add to the burden, one more child was born to them on the 16th of March 1901. The Guruvaiah couple received the male child with happiness as they thought the child as the gift of god. When they saw the child, some how

they felt a strange feeling. They thought that this child would bring lot of luck to the family.

The child was named Potti Sriramulu, potti being the family name. They looked after the child with atmost care and caress.

Sriramulu was a lovely child. His smiling face, childish pranks made the whole family thrilled. He was the most favourite of his brother Narayana and Sister Guramma. Though he was cheerful, he never was mischievous.

The family was a happy family. They thought at last god has smiled on them. They were all content with what they had.

Both Guruvaiah and Mahalakshamma were god fearing people. They never missed their routine worship. Guruvaiah wouldn't leave home without doing Sandhyavandana, chanting and Lakshamma too followed the footsteps of her husband. She offered pooja to tulasi and atleast 25 times she would go round the plant.

One day Guruvaiah came home early. He called his wife to his side. She was surprised with her husband's strange behaviour. She asked.

"How come you are so early to-day!"

"Lakshmi, my master is going out of station. He has closed the shop. So I have the leave for two days. I thought I can spend the time happily with family. If you wish to see your parents, let us go."

"No, not necessary. Why spend money on journey. Let us celebrate your holiday with some sweet preparation. Children would be happy with the sweets."

Guruvaiah did not say anything. He consented to her suggestion. So whole family enjoyed the day with celebration.

The boy Sriramulu was very much interested to listen to the stories the mother told. He would listen to them with rapt attention. Mother Lakshamma had byhearted the entire chapters of Bhagvatgeetha. She used to read Ramayana and Mahabharatha. She would make the children sit with her and listen to the stories of Ramayana and Mahabharatha. She also told them about Prahalda, Bhaktadruva, Ekalavya, Markandaya, Shravana Kumara and finally conveyed the moral of those stories. The stories had great impact on Sriramulu. He imagined himself to be like one of them.

He adored his mother. He developed great attachment to her. Many a times he insisted upon going with his mother when she should leave to her work. But his brother and sister consoled him and held him back.

Things were going on smoothly. Sriramulu was thought of admitting to school. Meanwhile they arranged the marriage of their son Narayana.

Guruvaiah, though every thing was OK., and had no problem for simple life and two square meals a day, was looking rather sick. Now and then he complained of chest pain. But things were not being taken seriously. He was treated by a pandit in the neighbouring Place. He had the relief. After a few days he collapsed while he was fast asleep.

Mahalakshmmamma was shattered with the blow of death of her husband. The family was deprived of the senior bread earner. Now suddenly, the death of Guruvaiah was a big blow. Son Narayana, her husband and she, all the three had to struggle to meet both ends. All earnings put together too was not sufficient because the earnings were meagre till now.

Mahalakshmmamma, some how recovered from the shock and gathered courage, threw

challenge to the god that she would withstand all the blows, He has been sending. Many a times she would be disgusted with the god, prayer. But very next moment she would apologize to him and continue her worship and prayer.

It was the year 1907, Sriramulu was sent to school. In the Govindappa Naikar street, there was a street school called Banglavallikootam. It was not a sophisticated school as we see to-day. Poor children would come and study there. Even in the school, the boy noticed that some children were made to sit separate, a little distance from the general class of students. The little boy was wondering and questioned to himself why they are far from them and why they are asked not to mix and play with them. This question haunted his innocent mind. But from where to get the answer!

In that school there was a master named Narayanaiah. He taught the children with love and affection. He never scared them. Never used the cane. He felt that what ever is taught with love and affection in an informal way, the students would take liking and develop interest. More than the books, he used the oral

tradition. He narrated innumerable, wonderful stories from epics, Kathakosa, Fairy tales, Arabian Nights, Panchatantra and to add to the list of his stories, he would even tell the stories of great heroes of our history. He told them to be like ` Shivaji, Prithviraj, Porus and others.

He preached them great morals. He stressed the importance of discipline, sacrifice, charity, patriotism, kindness, unity, humanity, brotherhood, integrity and many other things. Sriramulu would listen to them with rapt interest. He would immediately memorise them. As soon as he came home, he would catch hold of his mother and pester her to explain further of those ideals.

Narayanaiah was so impressed with Sriramulu's behaviour, his discipline, interest in studies, quick learning, sharp wit, that within two years, he made Sriramulu to learn Amarakoka, Shathakas, Peddabalashiksha, Slokas from Ramayana and Bhagavadgeetha. He became Narayanaiah's favourite student. Whenever any officials came the teacher would ask Sriramulu to stand up and repeat what ever he has learnt. Even the officials were surprised to see this little boy reciting faultlessly the slokas from Sanskrit and Telugu

texts. They noticed some kind of intellectual charm in him.

Schooling continued. He was doing very well in the classes. From his childhood days, he cherished a dream of doing something great. He wished to achieve so many things. Shibi, Bali, Rama, Krishna, Karna, Shivaji, Ekalavya and many such personalities were the models before him.

Many a times he would ask his mother, "mother, tell me why did I come into this world?"

With such a kind of question mother was stunned. What answer would she give? But she had to somehow! Sriramulu would not leave it unanswered. She was not so well read, as to answer serious questions like the one her son had asked. But her experience in life made her more knowledgeable. In her own way she tried to explain.

"Son, you have asked a very good question. Not only you, every body has to ask this question for themselves. When we put this question to ourselves, may be, we try to make some thing meaningful out of our life. Every

one comes into this world with some purpose. God sends us to do some thing good for the society, people and the country in which we live. We are indebted to this society. We should not think what we get from the society and other people, but think what we have done to the society and the people. There are great many souls in this world who have sacrificed their wealth and life for the sake of others. But doing so, they will all be remembered even after they are no more physically. They become immortals. They earn reverence all through the ages."

He listened to his mother talking so emotionally with concentration. He seemed to be imagining himself to be one among such souls.

With innocence he asked.

"Mother would it be possible for me also to do some thing of that sort?"

"Yes, if one has mind and determination, any kind of hurdles can be overcome and reach the objective or aim of life. We should live for others and not for ourselves." She paused for a moment and continued talking, looking at him affectionately,

"Sriramulu, my dear son. We are very poor in terms of money but rich in heart. Your father lived for ideals. He never hurt a single soul or a creature; never gave up honesty, dignity, never humbled himself before any body by asking for help either in the form of cash or kind. So I want my children to prove themselves the true children of their parents who valued ideals and morals. I wish to see you grow up into a great personality. At no point of any situation, don't give up your morals and ideals. After all this life is not permanent. All of us have to throw away this mortal body, so remember this my son.

Mahalakshmmamma was in her full spirit. She did not even bother, how much her son would understand from what she spoke. Ofcourse that was the philosophy of her life's experience.

The boy became pensive. He seemed trying to take in whatever mother advised.

The days rolled on. Sriramulu completed his middle school. He had to change the school to study higher classes. He joined progressive union secondary school situated in the Adiyappanayakan street. While he was in high

school. There again occurred a blow. His elder brother Narayan died. This was followed by another death. His sister Guramma passed away. Series of deaths, however courageous they might have been, shocked them terribly. The god seemed to put them under test of fire.

Sriramulu was under great stress. He did not know whether to continue his studies or earn for the family. No teacher approved his discontinuation of studies. The teachers were in great appreciation for him. He was the pride for the school. Not even once the teachers expressed displeasure about him or punished him. Mother was in intense sorrow. For her the future seemed gloomy. There was no way for subsistence.

She had to maintain widowed daughter in law and the education of Sriramulu.

Sriramulu was her ambition; her dream. She could not think of discontinuing his studies. Some how he should continue his education, for that she over worked restlessly. She served in the neighbouring houses.

For Sriramulu, it was painful to see his mother working hard. He never wanted his education to be a burden on his mother. So he

looked for some alternative arrangement. He hunted for some free hostel. Finally he found one. He shifted to Kanyaka Parameshwari free hostel. With this, the problem of boarding and lodging was solved. From charities, he managed his school fees, books and other things. His teacher Mr. Doreswamy had great hopes in him for he had noticed the intelligence, studiousness, commitment in him. He expected high score and rank from him. But alas! All these expectations fell flat since he failed in his 10th class. He failed not because he did not do well in the exams but he could not write some of the subjects due to family problems and mental disturbances. His family was starving. This made him feel guilty. He felt he has some obligations towards family. When his mother, sister in law are dying, how can he think of his studies. He discontinued.

Mother, in the meantime was forcing Sriramulu to marry. But he laughed and said, "Mother, what a fool you are! When we don't have sufficient income to feed three people, why do you think of adding one more. Why do you wish to bring another creature and throw her into starvation?"

Mother tried to convince him in feeble voice, "Look son, I do not know how long I am going to live. I want to see you married, as well continue your education. Still I have some strength. Let me toil for the future of my children. When we four eat, another person will not be a burden. Let us share and eat. If not a full meal, let us eat half meal. My dreams rest in you son. Get married and continue your studies. Some how I will send the money you require for your studies. I will work overtime and send you. When you complete your education and get into a good job, you can repay me for what I have done. So now you have to agree for my request. I have chosen a girl for you. She is none other than Sitamma, my brother's daughter. She is very good looking and she is also well bred. She is very soft and obedient. She suits our family conditions. She will have no demands. So son you get married and further your studies."

When Sriramulu heard a big sermon from his mother, he had no choice but to accept her suggestions. He did not reply but kept silent thinking of pros and cons. His silence was taken for consent.

The marriage took place in a simple way. Sitamma's parents also were not very affluent. They also belonged to average middle class. So they were also not in a position to provide any monetary help to Sriramulu's family.

Though he had failed in V form i.e. 10th class. He was given admission to Diploma course in Sanitary Engineering at Bombay. Bombay life was very expensive. What mother had been sending was not enough to meet expenses of education, boarding and lodging. So he contacted many charitable institutions and persons at Madras. Knowing credentials and conditions of Sriramulu, people helped him generously. He established contacts with many great personalities and dignitaries in Bombay. They were all impressed with Sriramulu. They encouraged whole heartedly.

While he was doing his 4th year diploma, he was married. After completion of the course, he thought of setting up the family.

Family problems seemed to have no end. So immediately after completing the diploma with the help of his friends and well wishers,

he took up the job at Madras on a salary of forty five rupees a month. He worked there for few months. The salary was not sufficient to run the family. Hence he was looking for a better employment. Luckily, there was some vacancy in the railways at Bombay. He applied for it and got selected. But now he was in dilemma, whether to shift the entire family to Bombay or stay alone leaving the family at Madras only.

He approached his mother and asked for the advice. Mother did not like to leave the place where she had lived for years. So she advised him to take his wife with him. So that he will have no problem with food and she for herself will take care of. Though mother told these things with no bad intention, he felt pain at heart to think of leaving mother behind. However much he tried to convince, she would not budge.

Sriramulu finally had to leave mother behind. He took a small apartment in Bombay and settled with his wife. He was getting a salary of one hundred thirty four rupees a month. In that he would send some amount to mother for her maintenance.

Bombay life was not easy. Every thing was very expensive. But still they were forced to manage. He would leave home early by 6.30 AM and return late in the evening. He worked as a plumber in the railways. He had hardly any time to spend with his wife and take her round the city. His wife Seethamma was not happy in Bombay. It was a strange place. She did not know the language. She had no friends around. More than these things, the weather of the place did not suit her. Often she would fall sick. At that time, Sriramulu felt difficult to look after her and go to the work. Even then he managed. Before leaving to work, he would finish all the household work, give medicine, food to his wife. After returning from work, he was all at his wife's service. He caressed her, fulfilled all her requirements, attended to her demands. Seethamma looking at his devotedness, love and care, felt overwhelmed. She thanked her stars for granting her such a good natured husband. This was the reason for her not to complain about her discomfort, dislike for the place. She knew his helpless. For the sake of her inconvenience how can he give up the job!

Sriramulu had many responsibilities. He had his younger brother Rangaiah, who was also doing well in his studies. Now he was to be admitted to medical course. Another of his cousin also depended on him for studies. All these responsibilities had to be fulfilled with his meagre salary. But he never flinched. He was wading against the adverse waves. He was the eldest; chief; and bread winner of the family. He took things as they came. In his work place if he had thought of earning extra, he would have minted. He never sought to illegal means of making money. There were many important and higher up authorities, who insisted Sriramulu to join hands with them to earn by diverse and illegal ways. But Sriramulu bluntly refused and complained about them to the supremos. This brought a brush with his colleagues. They were all wrathful towards him. They even tried to put false allegations against him. But fortunately nothing happened, as all of them had known his chaste and clean character. They admired him as a person of values.

Sriramulu's family history sounds more like a saga of tragedies, perhaps these tragedies occurred to prepare Sriramulu for a great

cause. In 1928, 10th of May, he received a telegram, stating the death of his mother. He was shocked for a moment. He felt numb. All his senses seemed dead. Seethamma looking at his condition came running to him. She held him, and then walked him slowly towards the cot and made him lie down. Fanned for a while, went in and brought a glass of hot milk; made him drink. After a while, he recovered, but was looking blank. He was glaring at the ceiling. He was feeling emptiness all over.

Gradually he came to his senses understood the reality. He felt ashamed for his momentary weakness. He got up from the bed. Phoned to his friends to tell the authorities the reason for the absence of him for work.

He left to Madras. Stayed for few days to observe the funeral rites of his mother.

He could not stay for long there. He had to report to work, otherwise the work will suffer. Moreover there was no reason to stay further. He made arrangements at home. Though mother was not here, he had to take care of brother, cousin and his widowed sister in law.

The burden of the problems was unbearable. He cried aloud in solitude. Cursed

the fate. 'Why all the problems in the world should come to me?' He screamed within himself.

Amidst all these problems his wife's health deteriorated. The tests showed that she suffered from T.B. In this affected state she delivered a male child. But the child after five days of birth died. Series of onslaughts one after the other, shocked him terribly. He cried and cried. At one point of time he thought of hanging himself. But the mother's words of courage echoed in his ears. Picked up courage, no doubt, but he felt withdrawn. He had to live for the sake of his ailing wife.

He no more could stay in Bombay. Returned to Madras with the hope that the change of environment may bring back health to his wife, he sent her to her parents' place.

There she was again subjected to investigation. Doctors opined that the chances of recovery is too remote. She is in the final stage of tuberculosis. So at this stage nothing could be done. Sriramulu prepared himself to hear the death news of his wife, and there was no need for him to wait long for the news. She was declared dead. By then his

eyes were dry. No tears would slip from his eyes. He was accustomed to take the doses of poison. Repeated whips, made him as hard as stone. He decided to leave the family to its fate. He was feeling that he is destined for something else. He gave up the job; broke of the ties of the family, moved away from friends and foes. He was feeling sick. He did not know where to go what to do? Aimlessly wandered all around the places.

* * * *

IN SEARCH OF GOAL

Potti Sriramulu, now had broke away totally from the family. He went in search of some goal. Problems at individual level meant nothing to him. He was looking for something by which he can be useful to society at large.

It was the time when freedom movement was picking up some momentum. Gandhiji's name was resonating in the nook and corner of the nation. The freedom movement had started much earlier. But there was lack of one strong leader to head the masses with specific techniques or strategies to encounter British rule. Right at that moment Gandhiji appeared on the scene and stood in the forefront of the

Indian battalion of freedom fighters. He had returned from south Africa just then after helping a Gujarathi businessman in some legal complication. He had returned in the year 1915. Since then he made a thorough study of Indian political scene and British ways of ruling. In 1916, though Home Rule movement had been launched, he did not participate. He was speculating his own methods of struggle against the British. After a long speculation he came out with a 'Non-Co-Operation Movement' concept. He designed very many ways of Non-Co-Operation. This method of agitation launched by him, received tremendous support. The salt sathyagraha is one of such methods. The British had levied tax on salt which was very essential for all common people. Levying of tax on such commodity, he thought as inhuman. The poor farmers cannot pay tax on that. So in order to protest against levy of tax, he gave a call to participate in Dandi march. From seven lakh villages, ten people from each village were invited to join the march and prepare the salt.

Sriramulu heard about this. Instantly he decided to respond to the call. He was so

impressed with the charismatic personality and ideas of Gandhi, that he immediately left to Gujarath and joined Sabarmathi Ashram. Gandhi gave consent to take him into the Ashram only after he heard the entire story of his struggles in life. Gandhiji was moved by his pathetic condition. He took pity on him and agreed for his stay in the Ashram. But before that he told Sriramulu, "Son I do not know what made you come here all the way from far off south. I am extremely sorry for your family tragedies. But don't think life would be easy here. Ashram life is very disciplined and difficult."

Sriramulu for whom Gandhi looked a messenger of God, spoke in an obedient voice. "Bapu, I know the difficulties of this life. In comparison of what I suffered all these years in my life, this is nothing for me. I am used to walking thorny paths. Bapu I want to do some thing for my country. May be not in a big way, but in a small way like the squirrel helping Rama in 'Sethubandh'. I shall be your humble servant."

Gandhi was touched, he said, "Son, we are all the servants of mother India. She is crying. She is in bondage. Each of us should be a

battalion of hundred warriors. We must be prepared for any kind of sacrifice the mother demands."

Sriramulu listened to Gandhi with rapt attention. The seeds of advice started sprouting. His mind already was prepared for human service, and now with the words and charisma of Gandhi he became more determined and considered everything. Other than the service to nation and society all other things, were either secondary or meaningless he felt.

In the Ashram, with his devotion to work, behaviour, character, punctuality, discipline, won the admiration, not only of inmates but of Gandhi too. Gandhi was very much impressed with him and gave a special place in his heart. The rules, regulations of the Ashram, he followed strictly. He tried to follow the ideas of Gandhi to the core.

Gandhiji, where ever he went, he would give a call to follow certain principles, delivered inspiring speeches asking people to give up alcohol, not to observe untouchability; resign from government service; boycott foreign goods; use only Khadi.

All these inspired Sriramulu and he took an oath to follow the ideals of Gandhi and work with commitment to the upliftment of the down trodden masses. He also decided to eradicate the discrimination against the untouchables or lower castes.

Gandhi's methods of agitation and his principles though looked very impressive to Sriramulu, the same things were rather subjected to criticism by many great leaders like Nehru, Tagore and many others. In protest against Gandhian ways, they even floated an independent party called 'Swaraj'. The Gandhian struggle against the colonial rule was called as Sathyagraha. This meant not only Non-co-operation, Non-violence but also to protest against unlawful orders or rules. Real Sathyagrahi is one who does not care for his personal pleasures and well being and sacrifices himself for the people and the nation. All Gandhian followers were identified as Satyagrahis.

The country was gripped with patriotic fever. Irrespective of caste, creed, age, sex, the people in large numbers joined the band of freedom fighters. The struggle was becoming intense.

The satyagraha movement spread into the interior places of the country too! Young and old giving up their schools, colleges, professions joined the movement. All in their own individual capacity fought against the British Raj, protested against the orders of them. The British army ruthlessly arrested punished and even killed large numbers of Satyagrahis.

'Swadeshi movement' inspired the people to resort to things that are made in our own country and to boycott foreign goods. Hand spun khadi was advocated and khadi stood for patriotism. The khadi cap became an identity for satyagrahi.

Sriramulu actively participated in all these movements with vigour and rigour. He dispensed away his personal concern. Totally devoted himself into the struggle. What ever he did he would do it with pure heart. Like many satyagrahis, Sriramulu also caught the eye of British army. While participating in the picketing, protesting against the levy of tax, he was caught and sent to jail.

He was sentenced for six months imprisonment for being rebelled against the

government. This did not deter him. He never lost his courage but kept his cool. He accepted the punishment of imprisonment with delight. The cruel treatment meted out to him at Nasik Jail, never made him lose his heart. For Sriramulu this was the first experience of imprisonment.

Gandhi with all his busy schedule, noticed Sriramulu's grit and courage, his way of taking things. Over coming with joy, he exclaimed, "If there could be ten more people like Sriramulu, we can achieve freedom fast and easily. " Ofcourse this means a greatest compliment one could ever get from such a giant personality like Gandhi.

Immediately after his release from the jail, he had huge tasks before him. He hurried to Bihar to help the earthquake affected people. The earthquake caused unbearable tragedies. People suffered a lot. Many died, few were rescued. The loss of life and property was beyond assessment.

Sriramulu served the affected people in many ways. He attended their injuries. Consoled and comforted. Day and night without a wink of sleep, he served them. Here

again he was well appreciated by Gandhi for his untiring work.

When his services were no more required, he went to Gujarath and Tharawada village to assist Sardar Vallabhabhai Patel who was establishing a 'Labour Association' to undertake people's welfare activities. He extended his full co-operation in these activities. He stayed here from 1934-1937, and in 1938 he moved to Angaluru village. One Mr. Erneni Subramanyam had started a Gandhi Ashram here.

Sriramulu who was an ardent follower of Gandhian principles was well suited to this place. He took charge of the management of Ashram. He was trained under Gandhi and had imbibed the discipline in him.

He expected the same kind of discipline to exist in this place also. Inmates were taught to work hard, and shun the laziness. They were asked to have bland food. Daily, regularly he read Bhagvatgeetha to them. To some, he even taught to read and write. He not only preached but practiced it too. For two years he stayed there and proceeded further

on his mission of serving the society and community.

Going from place to place and helping, preaching, inspiring, he came to a village called Meredu in Nellur district. He spoke to people, addressed them. Narrated them the social problems; caste discrimination.

He noticed, that the lower caste or untouchables in that village were treated very cruelly. They were all socially boycotted. They were not allowed to move freely in all public places. Even public wells were not allowed to be used by them. They had a separate well for their use. Temple entry was prohibited to them. They were looked down with contempt. He carefully studied the problems, prevailing in that village. He wanted to arrange a meeting for the villagers and talk about Gandhi and his principles, his greatness, his struggle for freedom. He thought with this he would be able to bring some change in their mind. He called one of the villagers and requested to arrange for the meeting. Accordingly with the consent of the head of the village, he held a meeting.

Such meetings were strange in that village. People in big number gathered there and

curiously waited for his speech. He stood up on the pedestal and started with a slogan "Bolo Bharathmatha Ki Jai." Revered elders of the village and all my countrymen, you know we are all born as human beings. By birth we have no identity of caste. The caste system in Indian society is a great evil. The caste discrimination creates many problems. Many of the people whom we identify as untouchables, are suffering a lot and facing disgrace for no fault of them. They have been deprived of many of the essential human rights. Why can't they mix and share the respectable life with higher caste people, when all human beings are considered as the children of god, why should they be alienated, kept far from the main stream. Every one has right to live in a dignified manner, to go to places where ever one likes. The caste and creed are the major hurdles in the unity. The people whom we call untouchables are helpless lot. They are poor, ignorant. To forget the problems of life they take to drinking alcohol and this habit ruins them further. The so called higher community people should take them as their brothers; help them; attend to their problems, make them literate.

Gandhiji is striving hard to eradicate untouchability, instill in them hope and confidence!!"

He went on talking about sufferings of the community. At the same time he raised the water problem of that village. The only drinking water well was in a very bad condition. The water was not worth drinking. The people of the village had requested the village elders to attend to the problem and get the well repaired and water cleaned. But the chiefs of the village remained deaf ear. They never bothered to the cries of the villagers.

Sriramulu found no effect of his speech. Individually he visited each house. Appraised them of the graveness of the problem; requested them to attend to it. But they remained passive. Now for Sriramulu, hunger strike was the only weapon left. The use of this weapon was learnt by his guide and guru Gandhi. With this experience, he believed it would work.

Right at the centre of the village there was a stone plat form. He sat on that and declared this "Unless you repair the well and provide water to the villagers, I will continue this

strike. Even if I were to die in the cause, I do not hesitate" to the village elders.

The strike continued for two days. Elders and the Vysya community people realized his social concern, zeal and determination. They felt that they have no other go than to attend to the problem immediately. As soon as the response of them was seen, he felt happy and was inspired for further reforms. He received tremendous compliments.

Next task in this Maredu village was to free the poor lot from the addiction to alcohol. What ever little they earned, was spent towards the liquor. The women at home suffered a lot because of their men's habit of drinking. The men had become slaves to the drinking habit. As a result, he noticed their lives being ruined.

He told every one about the evil effects of alcohol. He told them that they lose not only money but respect in the society, mental balance and even health. He requested them to give up drinking.

Gandhi personally, and even the members of the congress party felt from the beginning to do some thing to curtail the habit of

drinking. They thought of bringing in the 'abolition of liquor' law. They discussed at the government level.

Naturally Sriramulu, being a disciple of Gandhi thought seriously of this problem. He sincerely advised them, pleaded them to abstain from liquor. They remained unheeded of his advice, with this, Sriramulu lost patience. He became wild with anger. But even then he did not give up his efforts. He thought of alternate means. Finally arrived at the decision of using the previous weapon, hunger strike.

He sat folded legs as before. The addicts, watched him from drunken state. They watched for one day, two days, three days. Slowly there was some stirrup in their minds. They understood his concern and agony for them. Now they all decided to give up liquor. They all came to him. They requested him to withdraw from the strike. He agreed to withdraw only on the condition that they should all take oath not to touch liquor in future. They did as they were requested.

He gained more and more confidence with the series of successes. He engaged with more

rigour in social reforms further. He felt the satisfaction of achieving the ideals of Gandhi to some extent.

By then the Quit India movement had rocked the nation. Freedom lovers now gathered from all corners of the country to protest against the British rule, shouting slogans of 'Quit India'. The agitation was becoming intense. Sriramulu like person cannot be expected to remain aloof. He also joined the movement. He shouted against the British rule.

Along with this 'Quit India' agitation, he had another task of removing untouchability, which he had already started at Maredu village itself. This was continued with renewed zeal.

Now seriously studied the problems of untouchables who were called 'Harijans' by Gandhi for he had felt that this way of referring would be little dignified. He knew well that caste doesn't come by birth but by professions they pursue and the character they develop.

Hence all should have the right to fulfil their desires and ambitions. All are the children of

god. Hence all should have opportunity to visit temples and get the glimpse of God. Hence he should do something to equate Harijans with higher caste people. He immediately decided to fight for the right of Harijans to enter the temple. He prepared placards, wrote the slogan 'Allow the Harijans into the temple'. He hung one around his neck, collected some Harijans to walk with him with placards held high, and shouting slogans.

He went on foot from door to door, pleaded them to consider Harijans equal.

For the people of the place, he looked funny, strange! Some of them laughed at him; called him fool. They turned their faces, looked at him with contempt.

It was not easy for him to make the people of Nellur to realize his objectives. In that place caste system was very rigid at that time. Sriramulu himself belonged to higher community, Vysya. They were even more rigid with caste. They did not like his ways of behaviour. Openly condemned him; jeered at him. They did not like Sriramulu taking the side of Harijans in the least. They tried to convince him to give up this kind of mission.

Sriramulu did not heed to their advice. As a result they sought to physical assault on him. They treated him cruelly. Despite all this, Sriramulu moved one step further. He went to the house of Harijans, ate with them. He did all this to establish his faith that 'Practice what you preach.' He believed that what one preaches others, should be practiced first. But the people of the place lost control of their patience. They could never imagine a person of higher community mixing with Harijans and eating with them. They stoned him, threatened to kill him. Sriramulu did not deter. He suffered every thing with calmness. More the suffering, more stronger his decision became, with grit and determination, he worked for the cause of Harijans. He undertook many projects to make them literate. He started an organization called 'Hindu Sangha Samskarana Samithi' in 1945 to uplift the down trodden. He wanted all Hindus to join hands in his mission.

After four months, he decided to open entry into a local temple, (Venugopalaswamy Temple) was very well known in the surrounding. He wanted entry of Harijans into that temple. He knew what he was doing. It

was a rightful thing. Hence there can be no fear of any sin. God cannot discriminate between his children.

He went to the 'Dharmakarthas' of the temple. But they bluntly refused. Once again he made repeated requests, but there was no positive response. But Sriramulu was not in the habit of accepting defeat easily. He challenged that he would achieve his mission. On 7th March 1946, he used his regular, powerful weapon, 'hunger strike'. The strike continued for nine days. The news of his strike reached Gandhi. Immediately Gandhiji proceeded to take action. With his effort, he got the government orders, to permit entry to Harijans into the temple. With this, the Dharmakarthas finally consented to the entry right to Harijans.

Sriramulu succeeded with one case. But he wanted this right legalized. So now he started to try for legal Sanction of the right. He even fought for the entry right into Madurai Meenakshi Temple, Guruvayur Temple. But he had to face lot of opposition, life threats, attacks, bootings and many other kinds of reaction. But he took an oath, that he would not stop this struggle until he gets this right

legally sanctioned. He wanted to get Harijans temple entry, Bill passed by the government. So on 17th and 21st March 1946 he wrote a letter to Mr. B.N. Murthy (Andhra Pradesh Harijan Seva Sangh Secretary) and on 21st November he wrote to Sri K. Kotireddy who was the then minister for Muzarayi department, pleading them to look into the issue and send recommendation for the bill. But there was no response, with this he was hurt. In view to condemn their attitude of indifference, he sent a notice of warning stating that he would go on hunger strike from 25th November, at 12⁰ clock. Even this warning did not affect them. So for Sriramulu hunger strike became inevitable. Prakasham Panthulu like leaders also remained mute. There was no word of appreciation. They neither showed concern nor curiosity. Sriramulu felt bad with their behaviour. For whom is he doing this? It was for the large masses. Socially boycotted, neglected, disgraced community! It should have been the responsibility of national leaders, so called socialites! But none showed little bit of interest. He was a lone warrior walking the thorny path.

He resumed the hunger strike. When the strike continued for 19 days, there seemed some sort of reaction. He received a letter from Muzarayi Minister Sri K. Kotireddy, promising that he would try his best to get the right of entry into temples for Harijans. At the same time he received the instructions from Gandhiji to withdraw the strike. So Sriramulu concluded his strike.

His time long experience made him realize that single handed struggle would be very difficult and time consuming. There will not be quick reaction from the establishment, society, and people.

To achieve great things one needs the support of like minded people. So he contacted the activists of Hindu Mahasabha, Arya Samaj and founded 'Hindu Samskarana Samithi' with 298 members on its role on 9th October 1945. Gandhiji, receiving the news, felt very happy and sent a letter of appreciation, congratulating him on the success of his mission. He now and then wrote to him, received advice and guidance.

Sriramulu with his commendable and stupendous work became reckoned. He tried

to implement all the rules and regulations of Sabarmathi Ashram, even here. He advocated the use of khadi, encouraged home spinning; advised them to boycott foreign goods.

He walked in the footsteps of Gandhi, executed all his principles and projects. He believed in the strength behind these activities.

Sriramulu was frank and outspoken. He wouldn't fear to show the mistakes of anybody. The people of the nation had great appreciation for him, for his zeal, outrightness, commitment, courage, constructiveness.

Anywhere, any kind of problem, Sriramulu would appear on the scene. He wanted to work for the cause. When municipal employs were facing problems, Sriramulu went on fast, and got the problems solved.

At Nelluru there was an orphanage. For lack of funds, maintenance had become very difficult. Sriramulu coming to know the problem, met the local collector and got some amount sanctioned and also raised some contribution.

Gandhiji once had said, as long as untouchability exists, I am to be considered

as dead - these words were always lingering in his mind. The government at the same time decided to observe 30th January as the 'Harijan Seva day' in memory of Gandhiji. But he doubted that the government to what extent would stick to its decision. So he himself ventured to execute this decision in some way. He started his usual hunger strike. In 1948 July he sat in front of the house of the then chief minister of Madras D.P. Ramaswamy Reddiyar. But the police lifted him from there and took him to the prison. As there were some legal complications, no one dared to come to his rescue. He was put in 'C' class cell. He continued his fasting even there. The prison authorities behaved inhuman way with him. They refused to give him even the lime juice. As a result his health failed. He was threatened, ill treated in many ways. He could muster mental courage but physical weakness was beyond his control. He vomited blood. He was in a bad health. He was released from jail in this condition of health.

He was out from the jail, but not free from his mission. Although he was in such bad health, he thought again to resume his

hunger strike. He was looking out for a proper place to begin his fasting. Again he chose the place in front of chief minister's house.

Again in 1949, on 12th of January he started his fasting spree and continued for 28 days at Sevagram. Dr. Rajendra Prasad came to know the situation. Immediately he sent a telegram to the government of Madras asking to declare and observe 30th of January as the 'Harijans Day.' Madras government obeyed the orders of the president. This was a great victory for Sriramulu.

After this victory he left to Nelluru to get the entry right into Chandramouleswara Temple, for Harijans. He requested the Dharmakarthas of the temple but the request was turned down. In the bargain he received brick bats.

But took every thing in a sportive way, never considered it as a disgrace.

During this time, the British government levied tax on all the essential commodities of day to day life. As a result corruption, black market, immoral methods of business flourished. Rice, oil, dhals like essential things became a scarcity. The people felt disgusted. Sriramulu noticed the concerned authorities

yielding to bribe and corruption. He openly condemned them. Bought the grains from Undavilli village of Krishna district and sold them openly. No amount of threat would intimidate him. While he was immersed in public service activities, he turned his attention towards formation of Andhra State concept.

To achieve separate Andhra was not an easy task. It has a long history behind.

The British had divided the nation into provinces merely on the basis of military facilities. There was no logic behind. They never took consideration of culture, language and traditions of the regions. Though people belonging to different languages, cultures and traditions, lived in the region, there was no unity among them. For the first time, the British authorities like H.H. Risley and Linel curtis felt the need for reorganizing the provinces or states on the basis of language.

The demand for separate, language based states from the Indians was putforth only in the last decades of 19th C. The first one to putforth the idea of separate, language based state was from the people of Orissa. The king

of Balasura and Bichithranand Patnaik submitted a memorandum stating their request for a separate state. Then all other states started the demand. With regard to Andhra, it is believed that the idea of separate state was originated around 1890 itself. In 1911, the map of total Andhra was prepared by Sri Unnava Lakshminarayana and others.

In the congress convention of 1912, the opinion of separate language based state formation is said to have been expressed.

In 1914, a meeting was held under the chairmanship of Nyapathi Subbarao and arrived at a decision, that the nation is to be divided on the basis of language. The same decision was endorsed even at the meeting held in Vizag.

With all this background in 1922, the idea of separate Andhra state was emphasized. In 1924, a demand to separate Andhra from Madras was put forth.

The then chief minister of Madras Unnaponagal Raju specified the areas for allotment to Madras and Andhra. He said Northern part of Koom river should be given to Andhra people and southern part of it

should be given to Tamilians. Sriramulu too was of the same opinion and so he let out the slogan accordingly. The legislative council meeting of 17th March 1927, All party convention of 1928, All India congress meeting of Calcutta in 1937, expressed the need for Andhra formation. Madras legislative council's decision of Andhra formation received the official consent. But with, Rajagopalachari raising objection to it, remained unexecuted. With this the dream of Andhra people was shattered.

They became enraged to see their ambition obliterated. Gandhiji also had supported this idea of separate Andhra with all Telugu areas coming under one administration.

To add to their disappointment the Dhar commission opined that in the interest of the nation and its unity, it is not advisable to promote language based separate states formation. Hence in the case of Andhra formation too, this was applicable. But however in 1948 December, the proposal for separate Andhra received the support from Jawaharlal Nehru, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Pattabhi Seetharamaiah and others. J.V.P.

Commission was appointed to look into the issue.

This commission expressed the opinion for the necessity of Andhra formation and presented its report. In that report it clearly mentioned that the Andhra people should forget about Madras city.

Andhra people expressed displeasure with this clause. They were forced to speculate seriously about the issue. At the same time, to add fuel to the fire, Andhra congress committee also endorsed the condition or clause of the JVP report. The Andhra people who were already unhappy, this made them even more angry.

Potti Sriramulu was hurt with the attitude of the leaders. He could not tolerate the injustice, discrimination shown to Andhra people. Every one was aware of this injustice, prejudice. But even then none attempted to question this.

Andhra congress committee, highlighting the injustices done to Andhra region, prepared a report and presented it to justice Vanchoo Committee. Some of the important points mentioned in the report are, as follows:-

1) After 1921, the undivided Madras was provided with water sufficient for 10 lakh acre of land. But from that Madras retained 96% and only 4% was allowed to Andhra.

2) In 1949, when the budget was presented, surprisingly some facts came to light. 84% expenditure for Madras and only 16% for Andhra was shown.

3) With regard to employment, electricity, Industrial development, Education - Madras enjoyed the larger chunk of share and Andhra negligible portion.

This kind of discrimination was seen as clear as possible. Every one thought of doing something in this regard. Sriramulu was fuming within 'I may die but I will save Andhra from injustice. I will see to its independent existence' he uttered these words within himself.

When all these political developments were going on, Neelam Sanjeeva Reddy was the Chairman for Royalseema Mahasabha (convention) He had read the report of the Dhar Commission. But instead of supporting the proposal for Andhra formation he reacted negatively. He declared that consenting to

separate Andhra means inviting doom. This statement of him was a shock to Andhra people. It is an irony that the person who opposed the idea of separate Andhra, became the Chief minister of Andhra later!

In 1952, All party meeting was conveyed at Madras and many political issues and development were discussed. But the issue of Andhra formation never came up for discussion. It was set aside.

This kind of negligence, provoked some of the leaders who were on the mission of Andhra formation. Of them Swamy Seetharam (G. Seethramaiah) who had worked as secretary in the Andhra Pradesh congress committee felt disappointed. But he did not give up hopes. He continued his struggle. Like Sriramulu, he also had realized the potential power of hunger strike. So he decided to go on fast from 15th August 1952. The hunger strike continued for more than 35 days. This was heavily weighing on his health. Many people, leaders and even Vinobaji requested him to discontinue the strike. But he never heeded. He had determined to lay down his life. Meanwhile, Nehru having come to know of the strike, sent a letter stating his promise

to look into the issue. But like all political leaders, Nehru's promise also proved false. So again he had to resume the strike. This time, he continued for 20 days. Every time he went on fast, there would be some promises and later they are proved false and empty.

Sriramulu watched the developments carefully. Studied the situation; tried to assess the pros and cons; analyzed the reasons for failure. `What should be done to stir the minds of the concerned leaders and authorities? was the first question put to himself.

He had seen the passive response for the hunger strike by swamy Seetharamaiah. But even then he resorted to it, because he thought that the hunger strike is the only weapon which would be successful and non violent one. The only thing is, once the weapon is wielded, until it hits the target one should not give up or run away. Come what may, should remain undeterred. Then there would definitely be success. He had so much faith in the hunger strike, he thought and told every body that it would rock the whole nation. The concerned ones will definitely yield to the

pressure. So with logical thinking, he not only decided to go on fast until death but also conveyed a press meet, explained his views and opinions, gave a declaratory statement that he would go on fast until death.

As per his schedule, 19th of October 1952, at 10.15 AM he sat in front of Bulusu Sambamurthy's house at Veera Bhadram Street in Madras and began his strike.

Ofcourse with regard to the issue there were differences of opinion. Some felt that separate state would put the unity at stake; some opined that if separate states are not formed, there may be discrimination between the states. In fact separate state formation on the basis of language would help in bringing together the common language speakers and also creating affinity and friendship and oneness.

Potti Sriramulu's hunger strike did not affect the leaders of the place, in the least. But he did not bother. He was sure at least after his death there would be stir among the people and leaders definitely take action.

He continued his fast for 35 days. It was too long a period. People, those who were passive

and unmindful, now came into senses. With concern and curiosity, they approached Sriramulu. Realized the cause for which he was throwing away his life. Their consciences were aroused. When a person like Sriramulu, single handedly fighting for the cause of masses, cause of state, how can any body remain unmoved!

People plunged into action. They condemned the indifference of the leaders, state heads. Letters reached the prime minister in heaps demanding a separate Andhra formation. Even telegrams were sent to alert them for speedy action. The signs of agitation were visible.

Sriramulu's fasting reached 45 days. His health seemed failing. The media flashed the news in head lines. The entire nation felt the graveness of the situation. But Madras government was inactive. It seemed to have taken it as casual. Prime minister Nehru, who had all through been promising to fulfil their demand, even now remained silent and, unmoved despite large number of letters demanding Andhra state.

Sriramulu's health became a subject of grave concern. Doctors were called to attend

on him. They investigated and declared that his condition is too serious. He has been vomiting blood of late.

People lost patience, let out their anger against the central government. Prime minister, President were threatened for grave consequences. Here and there agitations started.

The national leaders now feared. They felt if the problem is not solved immediately, the fire of agitation would spread sparing no body. So the prime minister finally sent a favourable report consenting for separate Andhra formation excluding Madras. Rajagopalachari too agreed for the demand but warned that they should never think of Madras city, and people of Andhra districts and Royalseema should come to some understanding when the situation came to some peaceful ending. Believing the words of Nehru, Sriramulu's friends, wellwishers, requested him to withdraw from the strike. Sriramulu had better experiences with Nehru's promises. The whole world may believe him, but Sriramulu wouldn't!

Sriramulu told one of his friends, that earlier, when Swamy Seetharam was on fast,

Nehru promised him the same way that he has been doing it now. Hence he cannot believe his words!

Sriramulu felt that Nehru might be taking them as innocent and playing with the sentiments of the Andhra people. So with any amount of request, he would not withdraw. The fast entered the 58th day, with that he seemed to collapse. Because of his failing health, every one became concerned. But Sriramulu kept his cool. There was neither agitation nor tiredness on his face. He had become skeleton like. The doctors wondered for his will power. Even after 58 days a person being alive was a wonder in the medical history. But here was Sriramulu making history by holding breath even after 58 days!!

While he was in this condition, on 13th of December, Tangutoori Prakasham panthulu came to visit him. Panthulu congratulated him for his successful struggles. Advised him to withdraw from the strike, end fasting. As soon as he saw Panthulu, he was delighted but the very next moment with grief he asked, "Panthulugaru, do you feel that there is any hopeful future for us? Do we ever succeed in realizing our dream of Andhra? Will ever the

conditions of the country improve?" He went on with series of questions. Despite his worse health he was concerned about his country and people. Panthulu was touched with Sriramulu's love for the country and his people. Panthulu had no answers to convince him. He too knew that there is no future for this country. So he told Sriramulu, "Sriramulu, even I am haunted by the same type of questions which you asked me. As far as I too feel, there is no hope; no future. I can never dream of any improvement in this country" answered in painful voice.

Then Sriramulu, immediately replied, "Sir, if this is the condition, what use my living in this world. I have no wish to live any further. It is better to die rather than live to see the pathetic condition of the country." He said in a tone of dejection.

Panthulugaru consoled him. He said death is not the ultimate solution for problems. He felt excited to see the commitment of Sriramulu. He was so concerned about his people and the country. But people like him are needed for future. He also made request again along with elders, younger ones, and leaders, politicians from all over the country

and from his own place. But Sriramulu was adamant. Bluntly he refused to yield to their request. He announced, "until separate Andhra is formed, I will not call back my strike. May be I will die even before the formation. But my soul atleast would rejoice over the achievement of Andhra people."

May be, he had the premonition! His health failed. Survival seemed remote. As if to prove his prophecy, he fell into unconscious state on 15th of December 1952, at 8.40 PM. His end was imminent. Friends and relatives were informed of his condition. Gradually respiratory system failed. With much difficulty he inhaled two puffs of air. That was the end. It was 11.20 in the night, every thing was calm. There was total peace on his face. This looked as the sign of satisfaction for what ever he had been doing.

In the afternoon of 16th December his body was lifted from the place where he was fasting, and taken in procession to grave yard. Large number of people gathered to pay their last respects to an immortal soul, Sriramulu. He had sacrificed his life for the state formation.

The people walking in procession hailed Sriramulu. They shed tears for their lost leader.

Finally he was assigned to the flames of funeral pyre.

His sacrifice did not go waste. The news of the death of Sriramulu spread like wild fire. For People of Andhra, death of Sriramulu was unbearable. The anger that was pent up in them now broke out. They plunged into agitation. Firing, picketing, strikes, stoning and burning of government property, lootings in railways - became rampant.

Controlling of agitating masses posed a big problem. The central and state governments were threatened. Fear gripped them. The leaders at the centre felt inevitable to grant their demand of separate Andhra. So after three days of Sriramulu's death, Nehru, the then prime minister announced that formation of Andhra pradesh would shortly be arranged.

Andhra people wanted Madras also in their Map. Some of the so called leaders could not tolerate the importance of Sriramulu. They were jealous of his fame. When Sriramulu, ignoring his personal life, fought for the

country and for their own state, all through his career, some of them thought of bringing down his fame by passing critical comments.

But whatever may be, one cannot forget or ignore the struggle and sacrifice of Sriramulu in achieving a separate Andhra state for the people of Andhra, on the basis of Telugu language.

Sriramulu should ever be remembered. He is an immortal soul. As Gandhiji is for nation, Potti Sriramulu is for Andhra state.

Rarely one can find a person like Sriramulu. But how much of him is being remembered? What is due for him is not properly paid. To what extent he is to be remembered, is not being remembered.

Fruits of sacrifice are readily enjoyed, but the sacrifice is coolly forgotten. This is the way of the world.

When ever we take the expedition into the world of history of Andhra Pradesh, obviously giant figure of Potti Sriramulu stands before us. He is an ever green memory in the minds of Andhra people.

* * * *

APPENDIX

- 1901 : Born on the 16th March at Juvveladinne village in Nellur District.
- 1907 : Started his Education
- 1920 : He joined Sanitary Engineering Diploma course at Bombay
- 1923 : He was married to Seethamma, his Maternal uncle's daughter
- 1924 : He joined Railways as Plumber
- 1930 : He met Gandhiji and joined Sabarmathi Ashram
- 1934-1937 : Stayed with Sardar Vallabhabhai Patel at Tharawad village in Gujarath, and involved with social welfare activities.
- 1938 : He joined the Gandhiji Ashram started by Erneni Subramanyam participated in the developmental activities of the Ashram
- 1942 : He joined the 'Quit India Movement' and courted arrest
- 1945 : He founded 'Hindu Sangha Samskarana Samithi'
- 1946 : On 7th March, he entered into hunger strike demanding for temple entry right to Harijans.

- : On 17th October and 21st he wrote a letter to the Mr. B.N. Murthy, who was secretary for Andhra Pradesh Harijana Seva Sangha, requesting him to send recommendations for the temple entry right to Harijans.
- : Again on 21st November, he wrote one more letter to Sri K. Kotireddy, the minister who held the portfolio of Mujarayi department on the same issue
- : On 15th of November he entered into hunger strike to press the demand for temple entry right bill.
- 1949 : On 12th January, after the release from the jail, he resumed hunger strike and continued it for 28 days to get the order of declaration to observe 30th January as Harijans day.
- 1952 : On 19th October, he began his hunger strike in front of Bulusu Sambamurthy's house, demanding for separate Andhra continued his fasting spree for 58 days. His health failed drastically.
- : On 15th of December, 11.20 PM he breathed his last.

* * * *



The Author of this book Dr. Vijaya Subbaraj is a Professor Emeritus, Scholar, Writer, Artist and a very good speaker. As a professor of Kannada, has taught in MES College for more than 34 years. Her excellent teaching, commitment to the profession earned her 'Best Teacher' Award from Government of Karnataka, Collegiate education in 2002.

She has not stopped at being a teacher, she is very well known in the field of literature as a poet, play wright, critic, novelist, short story writer, translator and even as a column writer.

Her areas of activities are innumerable. She is associated with Television, Radio and the Stage, either as a Producer, Director, Writer, Artist and in many other capacities.

In addition to her high qualifications like M.A., Ph.D. in Kannada, M.A. (Eng), Law Degree, Diploma in French and Sahithya Rathna in Hindi, she has authored more than fifty books and won many awards which include attimabbe Award, Kannada Sahithya Parishat Award, Gorur Award, MES College Silver Jubilee Award, Perla Award and many other such Awards. She also has been a jury in many award committees.

It is our good fortune that we came across such a scholar and an educationist and also a reknowned writer. When we requested her to write Biography of Potti Sriramulu, she willingly consented to write. Now this book is before you. Hope you will receive this with delight.

We are thankful to her for writing our series inspite of her busy schedule.

Publisher

ISBN : 978-81-907573-0-0



SRI SARASWATHI BOOKS
Bangalore